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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001413

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SUBJECT: ZANU-PF POLITBURO MEMBER OFFERS SUCCESSION INSIGHTS

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher W. Dell under Section 1.4 b/d

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) ZANU-PF Secretary for Information and Publicity Nathan Shamuyarira told the Ambassador on November 28 that the forthcoming ruling party conference was unlikely to finalize the succession issue. The party would instead settle the issue in 2007. He opined that the presidential and parliamentary elections should be unified in 2008 so that ZANU-PF could capitalize on the opposition's disarray. Commenting on potential successors, Shamuyarira added the names of former-Finance Minister Simba Makoni, Speaker of Parliament John Nkomo, and Vice President Joseph Msika to the traditional mix. The Old Guard ZANU-PF insider recited the party's now stale attack on sanctions, but said he agreed with the Ambassador's contention that both sides must instead look to the future. End Summary.

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Succession To Wait Until After Conference  
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¶2. (C) Asked by the Ambassador for his expectations for the ruling party's December 14-17 conference, Shamuyarira said expectations were too high and that the succession debate would likely only be finalized in 2007. Unlike the party congress held every four years, the annual party conference had no mandate to decide major policy issues, according to Shamuyarira. With 7,000 people expected, the conference was not the proper venue for a serious discussion. Instead, the conference would review measures to turn around the economy.

¶3. (C) Shamuyarira added that the ZANU-PF Politburo had

agreed to merge the presidential election scheduled for 2008 with the parliamentary election scheduled for 2010, but had yet to decide on how to merge them or who should stand as the party's presidential candidate. These issues would be left for 2007. Rather than amend the constitution to extend the president's term until 2010, Shamuyarira said he favored accelerating the parliamentary election to 2008. Such a move would be easier, as the president can dissolve the legislature at any time. Shamuyarira commented that an early parliamentary election would also allow the ruling party to capitalize on divisions within the opposition to win additional seats in the body.

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Field of Successors Widens  
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¶4. (C) Surveying the list of would-be successors to Mugabe, Shamuyarira mentioned former Finance Minister and fellow Politburo member Simba Makoni, Speaker of Parliament John Nkomo, and Vice President Joseph Msika in addition to the traditional mix of Joyce Mujuru and Emmerson Mnangagwa. Makoni was a serious candidate, although "a dark horse" due to his absence from the political limelight. Shamuyarira cautioned that Msika should not be written off and that despite his advanced age (N.B. he turns 84 in early December) he remains vigorous and strong. Shamuyarira also noted Nkomo's statement to journalists last Friday that he was interested in the presidency. Should Msika not run, Shamuyarira said that Mugabe, out of commitment to the Unity Accord that merged the Ndebele and Shona ethnic components of the ruling party, may support the minority Nkomo's bid.

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¶5. (C) Shamuyarira dismissed the Ambassador's suggestion that Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono also appeared to be in the running. Gono was a good performer on economic matters and made "good copy," according to the former journalist, but he would "be massacred" if he stepped into the political ring.

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Looking Beyond the Sanctions Rhetoric  
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¶6. (C) The Politburo member recited the seemingly obligatory condemnation of Western sanctions and supposed propaganda that precluded investment. In response, the Ambassador noted that during his more than two years in Zimbabwe not one US investor had approached him for advice. Instead, foreign investors were assessing Zimbabwe's economic and political fundamentals on their own and staying away due to the GOZ's assault on rule of law and economic mismanagement.

¶7. (C) Furthermore, the Ambassador said that the USG was interested in playing a constructive role in Zimbabwe's future, not in arguing about the past. The USG was eager to join a discussion of what Zimbabwe's future should look like, but first needed to see that the GOZ had the political will to address the governance question. Shamuyarira agreed, saying that "we should look to the future, not live in the past." Further opening the door, he conceded that "we've made our own mistakes".

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Comment  
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¶8. (C) Providing an apt analogy for today's ZANU-PF, the 78-year old Shamuyarira did not look well ) his skin appeared chalky and gray, and despite an over-sized hearing aid the Ambassador periodically had to repeat himself several times to be heard. Also showing his advanced age, Shamuyarira opened the meeting by noting that many of his schoolmates have since retired ) and presumably many more have died also. Perhaps because of his age, he was

remarkably candid with the Ambassador. Although the media and business community have for some time been muting the possibility of Makoni as a reform-minded successor, this is the first mention we have heard from a Politburo member.

19. (C) As for the up-coming ZANU-PF conference, we are not holding our breath that the succession issue will be finalized by year end. Instead, this year's meeting is shaping up to be little more than a highly-choreographed pep rally, much like last year's and the ones before it. As Shamuyarira suggests, Mugabe is expected to postpone a decision on succession until next year. While pressure is mounting for him to make an anointment, the inclusion of new names into the succession hopper probably serves to mitigate these stresses as new factions emerge and focus their ire on party rivals, rather than Mugabe himself. Nkomo's statement that he might become a candidate was probably meant to signal his interest in the vice presidency slot and to remind Mugabe that the latter cannot assume other party leaders will automatically fall into line behind the president's choice for a successor. Meanwhile, Shamuyarira is being disingenuous concerning Msika, who is widely believed to be in poor health and anxious to leave public office.  
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